Mr. K. T. Achyutan *(Ezhuvas-Talappalli):* What amount comes to the Government out of this Rs. 16?

Mr. T. Narayana Menon *(Conservator of Forests):* We get at the rate of Rs. 1—8—0 per ton or Rs. 3 per cartload.

Mr. V. J. Mathai *(Planters):* I hope there is a sufficiency of supply.

Mr. T. Narayana Menon *(Conservator of Forests):* There is ample quantity available from the fellings in the hill-paddy areas.

Mr. M. Krishna Menon *(Trichur-North):* Cannot the Government call for tenders to remove all the quantity on the Hill paddy areas.

Mr. T. Narayana Menon *(Conservator of Forests):* This cannot be of much help, as the difficulty is in respect of availability of labour and transport facilities.

53. Mr. K. Narayana Menon *(Mulakunnathukavu)* : Will Government be pleased to state.—

(*a*) whether they are aware of the exhorbitant rise in price of fuel in the main centres of the State;

(*b*) will Government be pleased to consider the advisability of opening depots at important centres to relieve this strain?

Mr. T. Narayana Menon *(Conservator of Forests)* : (*a*) Yes.

(*b*) Arrangements have been made by the Forest Department for the supply of fuel in Trichur Town at fair prices, in cart-loads as well as in smaller quantities through private agencies. The system is found to be working successfully, and its extension to other centres is being considered.

After Questions and Answers the President left the Chair and the Deputy President presided.

VOTING OF DEMANDS FOR GRANTS

12. Forests and Tramway—Rs. 8,24,616

Mr. T. Narayana Menon *(Conservator of Forests):* Sir, I beg to move for a grant of Rs. 8,24,616 under XII—Forests and Tramway. It is but seldom that I am able to present the case of the Department under my charge along with its Budget, as from its usual place at the fag-end of the agenda, the motion for its grant generally gets the chance of only being put from the Chair during the last five minutes of the Session. I am grateful to the Diwan-President for making sure of my chances this time by changing the place of the Forest Budget in the agenda. I welcome this opportunity all the more as this is the last occasion when I shall have the privilege of presenting the Forest Budget before this House.

As regards the financial aspect of the budget there is very little for me to add to what has been so lucidly explained already by my friend, the Hon'ble Finance Member. In 1117, the gross receipts reached the record figure of Rs. 9·66 lakhs with a net surplus of Rs. 5·48 lakhs which was also the highest on record in the annals of the Department. According to the revised estimate of the current year a higher gross revenue of Rs. 11·21 lakhs is anticipated with a net surplus of Rs. 4·73 lakhs. For 1119, the gross receipts are expected to go still higher, namely to Rs. 12·90 lakhs, while the surplus is estimated at Rs. 4·48 lakhs. It may be explained here that the record surplus of Rs. 5·48 lakhs realised in 1117 is abnormal and disproportionately high as compared to the gross revenue, being due to the fact that over a third of the gross revenue was derived from the large number of teak trees uprooted or damaged by the Cyclone in the Plantations by the banks of the Palappilly river where collection and transport charges were very low. The slight decrease in the anticipated surplus for 1119 as compared with that of 1118 in spite of the increase in gross receipts is to be accounted for mainly by the rising costs of labour for timber-extraction.

The Department cannot, nor would it like, to claim any credit for the steep rise in revenue, realised or anticipated, during this period, due as it is to unexpected factors like the cyclone-havoc, the exigencies of the most devastating of world-wars and the ruinous price-inflation. These extraordinary and unwholesome conditions that have contributed to the inflated revenue have brought in their wake a number of complicated and difficult problems, and I am well aware that it is by the results of the efforts of the Department to tackle them that its work will be judged. I shall now endeavour to explain some of the salient features of the working of the Department.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

The first and foremost obligation of the Forest Department in these times is to make available for the successful prosecution of the War as much of the State's timber resources as could be spared even at some sacrifice of temporary interests, but without prejudice to the essential and permanent interests of the country. In 1117, 9,000 and odd tons or over 36,000 candies of timber were supplied for war-purposes; in the current year the quantity of supply is expected to exceed 10,000 tons, and in 1119 it is hoped to be able to increase the quantity to 15,000 tons or more, if possible. The magnitude of this contribution can be realised if it is remembered that the aggregate annual output of timber from the whole of the State forests during the prewar years seldom exceeded 6,000 tons. Here I may advert to the pertinent apprehension of my friend, the Hon'ble Member for Cranganur, regarding the risk of depleting the timber-resources of the State by the large-scale exploitation now resorted to for this as well as other purposes. I may assure the House that there is little ground for such an apprehension, as particular care is taken to see that supplies are drawn from sources the tapping of which cannot possibly endanger the interests of forest conservancy. The bulk of the supplies made for war-requirements so far came from trees uprooted or damaged by the Cyclone, over-mature trees of inferior species like kalpine and vellapine from the Tramway area which had little demand in normal times, or from obligatory fellings in forest-areas taken up for clearance for food-production. Fellings of standing trees of valuable species in common demand for local uses are but sparingly resorted to and, even when it is done in exceptional cases, fellings are confined as a rule to over-mature trees liable to deterioration if left unfelled for any length of time. There is, therefore, little danger of our timber-resources becoming exhausted with the termination of the War. I may also add that in pursuance of our afforestation programme invariably more trees than we take out are put in every year.

While on the subject of war-supplies, I would like to deal with the question of prices raised by the Hon'ble Member for Nellayi. I shall first of all explain the procedure followed in fixing prices for timber to be supplied for war-requirements. Before the major supply-contracts were fixed up conferences were held some of them in the presence of the Diwan, between the representatives of the Government of India Supply Department and the State Forest Department. All relevant factors, such as average prices realised by the State Forest Department for the previous three years, the ruling market-prices, and the present increase in costs for exploitation and supervision were taken into consideration and rates mutually agreed to be reasonable on a "fair-price" standard were adopted. The selling rates were fixed at royalty, (which represents the net value of timber) plus actual cost of collection and transport to the site of delivery. In fixing "royalty" increase in the cost of administration was one of the factors taken into account. I may be permitted to acknowledge here the very satisfactory response we have always received from the Supply Department to our representations, and the terms mutually argeed to after these detailed discussions will be found to be eminently fair and reasonable judged from "fair-price" standards and to compare favourably with the prices paid by the Supply Department for the same quality of timber to any one else. As a concrete instance, I may point out that the pre-war royalty of Re. 1 per candy for two inferior species, vellapine and kalpine, which form a considerable bulk of our timber supplies for war was enhanced to Rs. 7. The Hon'ble Member for Nellayi drew attention to the disparity between the rates charged for the Supply Department and those fetched at some of the recent public auctions. I would point out that the exorbitant prices offered at some of the recent auctions are purely speculative and cannot possibly be taken as a basis for any reasonable negotiation between two Governments, especially in view of the purpose for which the supply is made.

Another vital activity of the State in which the Department was called upon to co-operate is the food-production drive involving the placing of large tracts of forest lands in the hands of the food-producer. While the Department fully realised its duty to do its utmost to meet the demand even at some sacrifice of its special interests, it could not forget the fundamental truth that the indiscriminate large-scale clearance of forests, especially in a mountainous country like Cochin, is the surest way of making the country uninhabitable not only for the present but for generations to come, as liability to droughts, floods, erosion, havoc by storms, and a host of other evils must necessarily follow the removal of forests clothing the hill-sides. To avoid these dangers special care had to be taken in the choice of areas to be allotted for temporary cultivation, protective measures had to be adopted to check erosion and steps taken for the early re-afforestation of such of the areas as could not be kept denuded of forest growth for any length of time without serious detriment to public interests. It is proposed to take for re-afforestation next year 5,000 acres out of 15,000 acres allotted this year for cultivation under the Hill Paddy Scheme. It is not necessary for me to dilate on the various aspects of the Hill Paddy Scheme

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

which will be dealt with by others. I need only assure the House that the officers and staff of the Forest Department are rendering every possible assistance to the Hill Paddy Department. Every precaution is being taken to prevent or minimise the evil effects of the large scale destruction of the forests, which to some extent is inevitable in the working of a novel scheme of such magnitude. A number of the most experienced field officers of the Forest Department have also been loaned to the Hill Paddy Department for the supervision of forest-clearance operations connected with Hill Paddy cultivation. Thanks to the unsparing efforts of the energetic Superintendent, assisted by a favourable season, the success of the scheme seems to be assured and his fair to surpass all expectations.

In presenting the Forest Budget before this House in the year after I assumed charge of the Department, I had indicated the general outlines of the policy and programme which, in my opinion, should regulate the working of the Department. As this is my last Budget speech, I believe, I owe it to the House to explain to what extent I have striven to give effect to that programme during the period of my stewardship. I may be permitted to recall that two of the main points I had then stressed was the necessity for sustained effort to improve progress of afforestation, as well as to better the financial results of the working of the Department. I shall first deal with the subject of afforestation. Teak plantations were first started in the State in the year 1046 and between that year and 1066, about 800 acres were planted at an average rate of 40 acres per annum. Then there was a lull until 1086 when planting work was resumed. From that year up to 1107 when I assumed charge of the Department, 2,700 acres of plantations had been raised, the annual average of the period, therefore, coming to about 130 acres. During my tenure of office I have endeavoured to intensify this programme with the result that another 3,500 acres were got planted within the last ten years, improving the annual average to 350 acres. Here I may explain the justification for the statement I have already made that we invariably put in more trees into the forest than we take out of it every year. In raising teak plantations 1,200 seedlings are planted 6 feet apart in an acre to begin with. But an acre cannot hold 1,200 grown-up trees. So the excess number is periodically cut away until only 50 or 60 trees are left at the time of the final felling. Taking at the rate of 50 trees an acre and estimating at the rate of 3 candies to a tree, the 350 acres of plantations we have been raising each year should yield over 50,000 candies at the final felling. At least a similar quantity can be obtained from the intermediate thinnings also. Our pre-war aggregate annual out-put of timber including all species from the State forests seldom exceeded 24,000 candies, as I have pointed out already. Hence our teak-planting programme alone will amply suffice to make good the quantity exploited in any year. Further, our afforestation activities do not end here. Teak plantations are raised in areas more or less completely denued of all valuable tree-growth by intensive exploitation in the past. In fact, the bulk of our present teak planting is done in the heavily denuded portions of the forest tapped by the Tramway. In less denuded areas, instead of clearing the whole of the existing crop, only the defective and inferior trees are cut and removed under a system of "improvement fellings", and natural regeneration in such areas is supplemented by artificial planting of seedlings of the more valuable species. Under this system, about 200 acres had been treated at the time I took charge. This extent has now been increased to 1,900 acres. I may also state that it has been our general policy to confine the collection of timber from the materials resulting from these "improvement" fellings in the re-generation coupes. I would also add that if we have allowed an extra extent of 15,000 acres to be denuded this year we have also an extraordinary programme of taking up 5,000 acres for re-afforestation next year.

As regards the financial results of the working of the Forests, the annual gross revenue has more or less steadily risen from Rs. 3·4 lakhs in 1107 to Rs. 5·02 lakhs in 1116 and the net surplus from Rs. 1·2 lakhs to Rs. 2·7 lakhs. Taking the Forests and Tramway together, the gross receipts have steadily risen from Rs. 4·4 lakhs to Rs. 6·3 lakhs and surplus from Rs. ·9 to Rs. 3·1 lakhs during the same period. I have advisedly stopped short at 1116 so as to exclude the period of abnormal increases during the last two years.

Another matter on which special attention was bestowed was with regard to the working of the Tramway. Here again it will be best to quote figures. It may be recalled that the criterion laid down by Mr. (now Sir, Albion) Banerjee for judging the success of the working of the Tramway was that the sale of timber brought down by the Tramway should leave a surplus after setting off the expenditure involved in the exploitation of timber, the maintenance of the Tramway and two per cent on the Capital. Working out the financial results from the year of the inception of the Tramway on the above basis it will be found that the net surplus for the period of 25 years from 1082 to 1106 is Rs. 11·20 lakhs or ·44 lakhs on an average per annum. During

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

the period from 1107 to 1117 it was Rs. 6·98 lakhs or ·64 lakhs on an average per annum, thus increasing the average annual surplus by about 50 per cent.

I have to crave the indulgence of the House for the personal note in the concluding portion of my speech, which I have introduced only in the belief that I owe a duty to the House to bring to their notice to what extent I have been able to fulfil the programme that I placed before the House at the commencement of my tenure of office, in respect of some of the important aspects of the work of the Department.

I now request that the House may be pleased to grant the allotment I have moved under Forests and Tramway.

CUT MOTION No. 11

*Mr. A. V. Moothedan *(Chalakkudi)*: I beg to move *to reduce the allotment of Rs.169,500 for Tramway Transport Charges by Re.1, to request the Government that the Workmen's Compensation Act should be made applicable to the workers of the State Tamway.*

Before I enter into the subject, I wish to pay a compliment to the retiring Conservator of Forests. I may state on the floor of the House that he is a very honest and conscientious officer, and nobody in the State can honestly say that he had not done his duties to the best of his abilities. *(Hear, hear)*. I wish him all rest after retirement. But he must always try to serve the people of the State in his retired life also.

I want to know from the Advocate General whether the Workmen's Compensation Act is not applicable to the workers of the State Tramway.

Mr. M. Sivarama Menon *(Advocate-General)*: It is not applicable. The Tramway servants do not come under the Workmen's Compensation Act.

Mr. A. V. Moothedan *(Chalakkudi)*: It is only just that these people should be included among the beneficiaries of the Workmen's Compensation Act. In the Cochin Harbour, they are paying compensation in case of an accident. It is under the Government of India. Only very recently one Vala died when the boat was upset. They paid him Rs. 700 within 3 months. I brought this matter to the notice of the Government. Very recently there was an instance of a fireman of an engine, an Aglo-Indian, who died by an accident. The engine ran over him, and he was cut into two pieces and he died instantaneously. He has a wife and children, and I understand that the Government are proposing to give Rs. 50. According to the Workmen's compensation Act, the widow and children are entitled to Rs. 700. I do not understand how it is equitable that the Workmen's Compensation Act should not be made applicable to the Tramway workers. The Railway workmen get compensation. The Harbour workmen get compensation. The workmen in the Burma Shall get compensation.

Mr. T. A. Ramachandra Ayyar *(Nellayi)*: Is not the Tramway a Railway?

Mr. T. Narayana Menon *(Conservator of Forests)*: It is not a railway in this sense that there is no passenger traffic. It is only intended for the carriage of timber.

Mr. Joseph Patta *(Adur)*: With reference to passengers there is a difference. But as regards the Workmen's Compensation Act why such a technical distinction between the Tramway and the Railway.

Mr. T. Narayana Menon *(Conservator of Forests)*: I was only just replying to the question put by Mr. Ramachandra Ayyar as to the difference between the Railway and the Tramway.

Mr. A. V. Moothedan *(Chalakkudi)*: It is very unjust that this beneficial Act which is intended to benefit all workmen, should be excluded from the Tramway Department. Tramway is similar to railway there is absolutely no difference at all. In the Cochin Harbour, they are paid compensation. I request Government will be pleased to give this matter their sympathic consideration.

Mr. C. J. Mathew *(Joint Secretary to Government)*: We will give the matter a most sympathetic consideration.

മിസ്റ്റർ വി. കെ. കൃഷ്ണമേനോൻ—സാധാരണ ഇവിടങ്ങളിലെല്ലാ കമ്പനികളിലുള്ള ആനുകൂല്യം അവർക്കില്ല.

Mr. T. Narayana Menon *(Conservator of Forests)*: This question had not come up for the consideration of this House before this. Now that it has been brought to notice, we will

*Speech not corrected by the Hon'ble Member.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly

take the necessary steps to see whether anything can be done to help the Tramway Staff in this matter.

Mr. A. V. Moothedan *(Chalakaudi)*: The accident took place about one year ago. They are poor, helpless people, helpless people. They made a representation to me a month ago. Nearly one year has passed and no action is taken. In the other instance in the Harbour, within 3 months they deposited the amount in the District Magistrate's Court.

Deputy President: The question before the house is not whether any particular man did not get the workmen's compensation, but whether it should be made applicable to the Tramway workers. Government have given an assurance in the matter.

Mr. T. Narayana Menon *(Conservator of Forests)*: The whole question will be carefully gone into.

മിസ്റ്റർ ടി. എ. രാമപത്തയ്യർ.—30—ം, 35—ം കൊല്ലം സർവ്വീസ് ചെയ്ത റിട്ടയർ ചെയ്ത ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥന്മാരുമുണ്ട്. അവരുടെ കാര്യവുംകൂടി ഈ കൂട്ടത്തിൽ പെടുത്തുമോ?

മിസ്റ്റർ ടി. നാരായണമേനോൻ.—അങ്ങിനെയുള്ളവർക്കും പെൻഷൻ കൊടുക്കേണ്ട കാര്യത്തെപ്പറ്റി ആലോചിക്കുന്നുണ്ട്.

Mr. A. V. Moothedan *(Chalakkudi)*: I may be allowed to withdraw the cut motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn

CUT MOTION No. 12

Improving Nelliyampathy Planting District

Mr. V. J. Mathai *(Planters)*: Sir, I request the Chair to permit me to make a few preliminary remarks since we know now that the Hon'ble Member the Conservator of Forests is to have his last budget speech today. As the representative of an industry which is closely connected with the Forest Department, an industry which owes a lot to the very valuable services of the Conservator of Forests, it is my bounden duty on behalf of my constituency, and I believe my voice will be supported by the whole State—to say that in the retirement of Mr. Narayana Menon we will be losing a very competent and faithful servant of the State. Sir, I won't go on further except to bid him farewell on the floor of this House and to say "farewell though faithful and good servant" enjoy the rest which you have rightfully earned, but always keep a heart for our people and use your vast experience in the service of the people of the State.

With these few remarks, Sir, I wish to move *to reduce the allotment of Rs. 4,051 for B Salaries and Establishment by Re. 1, to discuss the need for improving the Nelliyampathi Planting District and adopting the recommendation of an Expert Committee.* It is well known that a road which has always been called a white elephant but which is a perfectly black one has been constructed to the Nelliyampathy Planting District at a tremendous cost of lakhs of rupees and the maintenance of that road is costing tens of thousands of rupees every year. The original idea was to open up the vast possibilities of the District and develop planting as the only excuse for that road. The intention remains there. But the planting area has not been open. On the other hand, I can recall to the house that in the edies of 1800 there were about 30 European planters alone there and there was even a race-course. The Planting District has lost tremendously. Estates have been abandoned one after another and to-day we see the woeful spectacle of 7 estates alone remaining in the Nelliyampathy District. That is the present position. The chief reason was that whenever opportunities arose for disposing of lands in that district, the opportunities were not used. When the tea boom came, no effort was made to advertise the land in the Nelliyampathy with the result that no tea grower came to our State. The result of it is that there are only roughly 2,000 acres under tea plantation in the whole of the Cochin State while in Travancore it is over 30,000. So far as rubber is concerned there are only 11,600 acres and odd, while Travancore, our Sister State with 5 times the area possesses to-day according to previous figures 1,20,000 acres under rubber cultivation, that is just ten times the area. I am sure with the new permits now issued, it must have gone to about 2 or 3 lakhs. We have all heard of the tremendous boom which was being enjoyed by the planting industry last year. Tea gardens were going at about 2,000 rupees per acre and rubber selling at Rs. 1,500 and coffee at Rs. 1,000 per acre. I do not know whether the House expects me to go into the details. I shall succinctly say that the whole question requires a re-orientation of outlook.

LIBRARY ARCHIVES Kerala Legislative Assembly